



IELTS Practice Test Volume 7

Reading Practice Test 1

HOW TO USE

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Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1 -13, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.



From Hand to Mouth

A. Once again, southern Africa is facing a severe food crisis. It is a chronic problem - and shouldn't be. At the Trinity hospital in Malawi's southern Nsanje district, three-year-old Mboyi is lying listless, his face against the wall. His belly is badly bloated and skin is peeling off his legs. His mother explains that the family has not been able to harvest anything this year, due to poor rains. Mothers in the area are already bringing malnourished children to hospitals in alarming numbers. Yet, it will be another six months before the next harvest.

B. Aid agencies are sounding the alarm, hoping that help will come before emaciated children's haunting images, such as those recently seen in Niger, appear on western television screens. The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) says that close to 12 million people across southern Africa will need food aid before the next harvest. The agency is short of more than \$150 million to feed them over the next six months. Malawi and Zimbabwe are by far the hungriest, but Mozambique, Zambia, Lesotho, and Swaziland are also affected. The drought may be southern Africa's worst in a decade. The crucial rains of January, when newly planted crops need water, did not come on time. Nor, in some places, did seeds and fertiliser. Maize, the staple food, is scarce in some areas; prices in markets have shot up beyond the means of the hungriest.

C. Though the problem is particularly severe this year, it recurs across southern Africa. Food is produced mainly by subsistence farmers on small plots with no irrigation, their fate tied to rain falling in the right amount at the right time. Bad roads and unreliable transport make it expensive to move food and seeds. Without proper marketing channels, small farmers cannot sell whatever surplus they may have outside their neighbourhoods. This leaves southern Mozambicans hungry, even when crops are plentiful up north. Maize is ill-suited to the climate,

needing too much water. In Malawi, there are too many people for the land. Partly due to bad farming, yields are low. And the region has the world's highest rate of AIDS.

D. Many small farmers struggle to make ends meet even in good years, so one bad season can be disastrous. And in Swaziland and Mozambique, they are facing their fourth dry year in a row. Unable to grow enough to feed themselves or borrow their way out of hard times, farmers end up losing the few assets they have. In Malawi, those without anything left often resort to cutting and selling firewood, further eroding the soil and making their plots still less productive, or else fishing already depleted waters. Others venture into crocodile-infested rivers to dig out water-lily tubers for food.

E. Bad government policy sometimes makes things worse. In Zimbabwe, once the region's breadbasket, land grabs have crippled commercial agriculture and irrigation systems. Hyperinflation and lack of foreign exchange make it hard to buy seeds and fertiliser, while fuel shortages stymie crop transport. A recent operation to "clean up" cities by bulldozing supposedly illegal dwellings has left another 700,000 people destitute, adding to the ranks of the hungry. The government has so far refused to endorse the UN's proposed emergency programme to help those affected. Other governments are less bloody-minded. Malawi, the worst-hit country, with 5 million people (nearly half its population) needing food handouts, wants help. In July, President Bingu wa Mutharika asked his compatriots to give to a "feed the nation" fund: so far, \$565,000 has been collected. In August, the UN appealed for \$88 million. The World Bank will give \$30 million.

F. Harnessing what the region already has would go a long way to offsetting its chronic hunger. In southern Malawi, rivers regularly flood - and are badly managed. By contrast, a big sugar plantation in Nchalo, its sprinklers spitting out arcs of water, is a green oasis. On a smaller but no less hopeful scale, the nearby Chitsukwa irrigation scheme cost only about \$20,000 and provided canals and enough low-tech pumps to water 18 hectares (45 acres), which sustain 176 farmers. Along the canal, women with babies on their backs labour on what look like portable stairmasters, pumping water into their fields: the maize is flourishing. Now armed with better knowledge, farmers are aiming at three crops a year, instead of the precarious single one to which they were accustomed. A few kilometres down the road, the land is hopelessly dry and barren.

G. Uladi Mussa, Malawi's minister for agriculture and food security, insists that expanding small-scale irrigation is a top priority. The potential is there, he explains, but Malawi lacks the know-how and money to do it on its own. Zambia and Mozambique have both welcomed exiled white Zimbabwean farmers, whose skills are already boosting local agriculture. Meanwhile, chronic hunger is threatening southern Africa's future generations. Close to half of Malawi's under-five-year-olds are stunted. Schools unable to feed their pupils report drops in attendance, as children are too weak to walk or are forced to help their parents find food. For them, the damage will remain long after the rains have come.

Questions 1-4

The text has 7 paragraphs (A - G).

Which paragraph contains each of the following pieces of information?

- 1 The main reasons why there is a lack of food in southern Africa year after year
- 2 How small development schemes can help to solve the problem
- 3 The things that some desperate farmers do to feed themselves and their families
- 4 The size and cost of the problem in southern Africa

Questions 5-8

Complete the following sentences using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the text for each gap.

The January rains are described as 'crucial' because 5 need the water.

Maize is an unsuitable crop in much of southern Africa because it requires 6

In Zimbabwe, much agricultural produce cannot be moved because of 7

8 can be used instead of irrigation canals to water crops.

Questions 9-13

Do the statements on the next page agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 9 -13 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE	if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN	If there is no information on this

9 Some farmers didn't get seeds to plant this season.

10 Poor infrastructure means that parts of Mozambique are

without food while other parts have plenty.

11 Southern Africa does not have many of the resources it needs to help solve its food problem.

12 Zimbabwe's government policies have actually helped neighbouring countries in one way.

13 About half of Malawi's children aged under 5 are malnourished.

Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 14 - 26, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.



Looking for Life on the Ocean Wave

A. Put one buccaneering entrepreneur-cum-bioscientist on a luxury yacht. Using some mighty fine nets, let him trawl the world's oceans for the smallest creatures. Catalogue the genetic diversity of this, the most abundant form of life in the largest habitat on Earth. Then hijack the molecular machinery of these microbes to make clean energy, new drugs or boost the ability of the Earth's lungs to "breathe" more carbon dioxide, and so limit global warming.

B. This may sound like the outline for a sci-fi potboiler, but it sums up the remarkable efforts of Craig Venter, the maverick American scientist. Seven years ago, Venter announced at the White House that he had identified all the genes - the genome - in the DNA of a human being. It was the culmination of a bitter race with an international consortium of government labs, and his bull-in-a-china-shop approach earned him the epithet "the boy of science".

C. It did not deter him, and while many of the critics in the scientific establishment who vilified him disappeared from view. Venter went on to become the first person to read his own genome and is also undertaking an extraordinary effort to create a synthetic genome for an artificial organism. Today, however, he is bobbing in the middle of the Sea of Cortez, mixing business with pleasure in a project to read marine DNA codes as he sails along the west coast of the Americas. His 29-metre sloop, Sorcerer II, is a floating laboratory. Rather than use the traditional method of studying microorganisms by growing them in the lab, which only works with one species in every 100, Venter is obtaining the genetic codes of anything and everything present in sea water. The result is a radical new view of life in the oceans, the modern answer to Charles Darwin's 19th-century voyage on the HMS Beagle. "We are starting to view the world in a gene-centred fashion," Venter says. "Our goal is to try to sort out

evolution, working back from the genes to what organisms are there.” He calls his approach “metagenomics”.

D. Microbes make up the vast majority of life on the planet and account for up to 90 per cent of the biological mass in the sea. They are the central processors of matter and energy in ecosystems. They are responsible for the creation and maintenance of the air we breathe. They are also, perhaps, our biggest hope of slowing global warming. Our oceans are the biggest “sink” of carbon, thanks in part to organisms that absorb carbon from the atmosphere to build their skeletons and shells, like “lungs”. Remarkably, the vast majority of these organisms are unknown. “It is important to understand their role and function to ensure the survival of the planet and human life,” says Venter, who is founder and chairman of the J. Craig Venter Institute in Rockville, Maryland.

E. The Sorcerer II expedition began with a pilot project in 2003 in the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda in which more than a million new genes were discovered in what was thought to be the marine equivalent of a desert. For the next two years, Venter flew back and forth to join the crew as it sampled the waters from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to the Eastern Tropical Pacific. ‘I did all the major ocean passages.’ he said. One in particular, through the Panama Canal, up to Cocos Island and down to the Galapagos, “was a transforming event, phenomenal” as he combined genomics with writing an autobiography and diving with sharks, all under the gaze of a Discovery Channel TV crew.

F. Using phenomenal computing power to reconstruct and analyse microbial DNA, with a single stage of the calculations taking more than a million hours of supercomputer time, a flood of discoveries has come from the latest phase of the expedition. Venter announced in a trio of papers in PLoS Biology a few days ago that his team had returned to port with 400 newly discovered microbes and six million new genes. Each gene contains the instructions used to make the proteins that build and operate living things, and Venter's bounty doubles the number known to science. His company, Synthetic Genomics, wants to harness this genetic information to use the microbes to turn carbon dioxide into propane and other fuels, short-circuiting the traditional geological process where ancient creatures are compressed into coal and oil over the aeons. Another target is hydrogen production, the ultimate clean fuel.

G. When it comes to climate change, the expedition has thrown up another key insight. Some parts of the ocean have more carbon-hungry organisms than others, and it used to be thought that populations reflected local nutrient levels. Venter has found that this may not be the case. The culprit could be bacterial viruses phages - which keep microbe levels low in some seas. “If we can understand this relationship more, and find out how to inhibit the viruses, or make the bacteria resistant, we would have a lot more organisms capturing carbon dioxide,” says Venter.

H. The biggest impact of his project has been on basic science, overturning many established ideas about the tree of life. It used to be thought that the protein pigment in our own eyes that enables us to detect light was rare. But Venter’s gene trawl reveals that all surface marine

organisms make proteorhodopsins that detect coloured light. “They turn out to be one of the most abundant and important, gene families on the planet,” he said. Blue and green variants are found in different environments - blue light preferred in the open ocean such as the indigo Sargasso Sea and green light along coasts. Venter believes these proteins help microbes to use energy from the sun, as plants do, but without photosynthesis. Instead, they use this “light-harvesting” machinery to pump charged atoms in the equivalent of solar batteries.

I. The team discovered many new proteins that protect microbes from UV rays and some that are involved in repairing the damage caused by UV. They were also surprised to discover that many kinds of protein that were thought to be specific to one kingdom of life were more widespread. This is only the start. “It’s clear,” says Venter, “that we’ve only begun to scratch the surface of understanding the microbial world.”

Questions 14-17

The text has 9 paragraphs (A-I).

Which paragraph does each of the following headings best fit?

- 14 How to save the world?
- 15 Research contradicts conventional ideas
- 16 Genome race winner
- 17 The importance of microbes

Questions 18-22

According to the text, **FIVE** of the following statements are true.

Write the corresponding letters in answer boxes **18 to 22** in any order.

- A Craig Venter is an unconventional scientist.
- B Venter has no scientific qualifications.
- C Carbon is used to make shells for sea creatures.
- D The Sargasso Sea has long been thought of as not rich in life.
- E The genes Venter has discovered are interesting, but scientifically useless.
- F Venter wants to make bacteria resistant to viruses.
- G Microbes may use sunlight as energy but without photosynthesis.

- H** Bacteria can protect microbes from too much sunlight.

Questions 23-26

23

According to the information given in Reading Passage 2, choose the correct answer or answers from the choices given.

Craig Venter

- A** is the only person to have read his own genetic code.
- B** owns a floating laboratory.
- C** disagrees with Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

24

Craig Venter's pilot project

- A** took place in the Sargasso Sea.
- B** ended at the Galapagos Islands.
- C** gave him the idea of writing his autobiography.

25

Synthetic Genomics, owned by Venter, hopes to

- A** make fuel from carbon dioxide.
- B** produce hydrogen.
- C** discover more species of microbe.

26

Before Venter's study, it was thought that

- A** nutrient levels depended on the number of organisms that eat carbon.
- B** certain viruses keep microbe levels under control.
- C** bacteria might be responsible for climate change.

Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 27- 40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.



Do You Look Your Age?

It can be hard to guess someone's exact age. A range of factors may leave marks on our appearance: how much sleep we've had - even the way we dress and our view of ourselves. The good news is that just as these factors can add years on to your appearance, it follows that they can also take years off. We don't always have control over some of those social factors that can make us look younger, but there are other steps we can take to try to stop the ravages of age.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Last month, the University of Southern Denmark published a report, *The Influence of Environmental Factors on Facial Ageing*, which showed that how we live can affect how old we look. In it, 1,826 twins were photographed and then ten female nurses aged between 25-46 years were asked to guess how old the "models" were. The results were intriguing. They showed that belonging to a high social class can make us look up to four years younger, and many other lifestyle factors were shown to affect the way we look. Having children was found to make men look a full year younger, though it had no effect on women, and having four or more children cancelled out the benefit.

Depression and sun exposure were the biggest factors in making you look old before your time. Depression added up to three and a half years to a woman's perceived age (and 2.4 years for men). Sun exposure piled on at least an extra year. Smoking put on six months for a woman and a year for a man. Meanwhile, having a high BMI (body mass index) was found to take a whole year off for both men and women. "If you are not depressed, not a smoker and not too skinny, you are basically doing well," says Professor Kaare Christensen (married, three children,

non-smoker), one of the report's authors. Professor Christensen's report concluded that it was more dangerous for our health to look a year older, than to actually be a year older.

NUTRITION

This is possibly the biggest change we can make fairly easily. There are four main factors that prematurely age us: smoking, too much alcohol, lack of fresh fruit and vegetables, and insufficient protein intake. You can immediately tell a smoker. It's not just the lines around the mouth and eyes, but smoking is dehydrating to the body. Every time you inhale on a cigarette, you're taking toxins into the body which have to be diffused and detoxified by the liver and kidneys, and they're dependent on plenty of fresh water to carry toxins away. Most smokers don't drink anywhere near enough water.

The really big, quick fix, though, is eating more fresh fruit and vegetables. You can see if someone doesn't eat enough, or any, fresh fruit and veg in a minute. The skin lacks a freshness and translucency. This is because the skin is the last organ to benefit from the nutrients you eat - the likes of the brain, heart, and lungs all get first share. If someone's diet is lacking in fruit and veg, the skin will become dehydrated. This is a sign that sufficient nutrients aren't being delivered, so from an anti-ageing point of view, it's important to have live, fresh food and raw food is vital. If you have to cook, steaming will retain at least some of the vitamins and minerals.

The other really important thing, and one we tend to miss out on in our diet-obsessed culture, is adequate intake of essential fatty acids (EFAs), from oily fish, nuts, and seeds. EFAs are vital for prolonging life expectancy because every cell in the body has a phospholipid bilayer that protects it, but they also give the skin a dewy, "bouncy", youthful feel. One of the worst things you can do in terms of looking old is to go on a low-fat diet. Stress is another big one for adding years. We can help support the adrenal and thyroid glands, which take a hammering when we're stressed, by eating plenty of fresh vitamin C and magnesium for the adrenal glands; and iodine, selenium, zinc, and B vitamins to support the thyroid.

EXERCISE

We've come to think of exercise as a pure slimming pursuit and women tend to be rather scared of lifting weights, but building lean tissue through weight-bearing exercise is key to keeping the years at bay. Exercise can help reduce the effects of ageing by slowing down the decline of type II muscle fibres. Generally, type I muscle fibres deal with aerobic activities and type II with anaerobic ones. The type II responds to resistance work to improve muscle tone. With ageing, there's a reduction in frequency, duration, and intensity of habitual activity: we generally move less. So, these type II fibres deteriorate because they simply don't get enough stimuli.

SKIN CARE

Almost every skin cream promises to make you look younger. It's a promise many are seduced by, but many end up disappointed. The problem is not that products don't work, but starting

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too late, and then not spending enough money. A lot of people skip good skin care until they think they need it, and by then it's actually too late. In women, the skin around the eyes is the first to go, in men it's the hands. A good routine should start early because maintenance is much easier than repair.

Your skin also becomes more transparent as you get older, so you need to adapt your make-up and hair colour accordingly. Foundation should be lighter than you'd imagine, and sheerer, and if you want to cover grey, don't be tempted to go for a too-dark hair colour or block colour - highlights are kind. Don't forget to apply moisturiser around the back of the neck: It's the only bit of skin attached to a bone, so it's important that you look after it to avoid sagging.

Questions 27-30

For each question, only **ONE** of the choices is correct.

Write the corresponding letter in the appropriate box on your answer sheet.

27 According to surveys, which of the following social factors makes a person look older?

- A Having more than four children
- B Having a high BMI
- C Spending a long time in the sun

28 Which of the following nutritional factors makes a person look older?

- A Eating lots of fruit and vegetables
- B Not eating enough protein
- C Eating lots of meat

29 How can exercise help make a person look younger?

- A By making them feel happier
- B It helps keep type II muscle fibres in better condition.
- C It increases oxygen flow.

30 What is the main problem with skincare products?

- A People don't use them early enough.
- B People spend too much money on them.

- C** Most skincare products don't work.

Questions 31-35

Complete the following sentences using **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the text for each gap.

The Danish survey used photographs of 31

The greatest difference people can make relatively easily is with 32

The human body uses the 33 to get rid of toxins.

A 34 diet makes people look much older.

People should use 35 on the back of the neck.

Questions 36-40

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 3?

In boxes 36 - 40 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	if the statement agrees with the information
FALSE	if the statement contradicts the information
NOT GIVEN	If there is no information on this

- 36 A person's social class can affect how old they look.
- 37 Having children makes men and women look younger.
- 38 Smokers need to drink more water than non-smokers.
- 39 Some people don't get enough fatty acids because they are slimming.
- 40 Most skin creams contain vitamins that are good for the skin.



Solution:

Part 1: Question 1 - 13

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1 C | 2 F |
| 3 D | 4 B |
| 5 newly planted crops | 6 too much water |
| 7 fuel shortages | 8 Sprinklers |
| 9 TRUE | 10 TRUE |
| 11 FALSE | 12 TRUE |
| 13 TRUE | |

Part 2: Question 14 - 26

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| 14 A | 15 H |
| 16 B | 17 D |
| $\frac{18}{22}$ A,C,D,F,G | 23 B |
| 24 A | 25 A,B |
| 26 A | |

Part 3: Question 27 - 40

- 27 C
- 28 B
- 29 B
- 30 A
- 31 twins
- 32 nutrition
- 33 liver and kidneys
- 34 low-fat
- 35 moisturiser
- 36 TRUE
- 37 FALSE
- 38 TRUE
- 39 TRUE
- 40 NOT GIVEN